



Dear Members and Friends of Union Church,
 In the New Testament book of Philemon, Paul tries to encourage Philemon to see his slave, Onesimus, in a different light now that Onesimus has become a believer. I love verses 15 and 16 of Philemon. Paul writes to Philemon, “Perhaps the reason [Onesimus] was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good — no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.” I think the use of the word “dear” in the NIV here misses some of the oomph of what Paul is trying to say. A much better translation in my mind would be the word “beloved.” The NIV probably didn’t use this word because people don’t use the word “beloved” the same way today. But “beloved” is what Paul means in this passage. Paul wants Philemon to understand that because of his faith, Philemon should now see Onesimus as a brother to be loved in Christ.

Paul’s words in this passage should challenge each of us. Few of us in the church today call fellow followers of Christ our brothers and sisters... much less a beloved. Most of the time we just think of other church goers as friends or fellow Christians. But that’s not how the early church spoke of one another. In the book, “More than Christians: Practicing Gospel-Shaped Community with the Language of the Early Church,” Norman Hubbard writes that the early church NEVER used the name “Christian” to refer to one another.

Huggard argues that in the New Testament, the name Christian was generally only used by non-Christians to talk about Christians and most of the time it was probably used as a put down. So, what did Christians call one another? They used words like brother, sister, disciples, saint, or beloved to address one another.



Now, I am not writing all this because I think we need to start calling one another “beloved.” I actually visited a church where the pastor called the congregation “his beloved” each Sunday and it seemed sort of weird. However, there is something important going on here. When we call one another Christian, we are simply saying that we are each followers of Christ. But as Hubbard writes in “More the Christians,” Scripture indicates that following Christ is more than just a philosophical choice, it is about a change that happens in our hearts, souls, and relationships with everyone around us. Hubbard argues that Jesus brings justification, redemption, and reconciliation to hearts. Justification changes our relationship with God and others by dealing with our guilt and need for forgiveness. Redemption changes our relationships with God and others by freeing us from our bondage to sin. And reconciliation changes our relationship with God and others by bringing peace to the enmity sin places between us and others.

Continued on next page

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Pastor’s Letter Continued Worship in May	2
Union Updates	3
Church News & Goings On in May	4-5
Church Finances Celebrations Community Prayer	6
Church Calendar	7
Save the Date	8

May Elders
 Tim Grigg
 Eric Nelson
 Lyn Wollenberg

Communion
 May 4

Stated Session
 May 18

Continued from page 1

So, let's go back to that word "beloved." I think most of us think of that word as a "feeling" word. A word to use with those we feel a deep love for. But in the New Testament, love is not as much about feelings as it is about behavior. We choose to love people. It's why Jesus says that it is possible to love our enemies (even though they are our enemies). Hubbard writes, "Calling someone your 'beloved in Christ' is a statement about who they are, not how you feel. Loving someone is not the same thing as feeling close to them, though the latter may come the longer we choose love... Your 'beloved' is not your spouse or that unique friend who shares almost everything with you. Your 'beloved' are those who have Christ in common with you, even if you share nothing else. Because God chose you, you are 'beloved' to one another. Because God chose you, you choose to love."

In Christ, our hearts, souls, and relationships have been changed. The way we hurt God and others has been forgiven by God. The way sin wraps us up in bondage from God and others has been hacked away. And it has all been replaced with peace. Being in Christ should change our whole world view. That's what Paul is trying to tell Philemon. When Philemon looks at his slave, Onesimus, he should no longer see a slave. He should see another disciple of Christ, forgiven and freed from sin, and in a brand-new relationship with God and others thru Christ. It should change everything.

I don't think that referring to fellow believers in Christ as "beloved" is going to make a comeback anytime soon. But I do think how we view one another in Christ can and should grow so much deeper. Are you ready to view other believers as more than just Christians?

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor James

WORSHIP IN MAY

At the end of April and beginning of May join us for a sermon series that looks thru the New Testament book of Jude. The book is only one chapter long, but it explores what it means to be called by God and set apart for his work. Then we will begin a 3-week series that focuses on why Christ's Ascension is so important for our faith. Ascension Sunday is often one of the most overlooked Christian holidays of the church calendar. Most of us understand the reason to celebrate on Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and even Christ the King Sunday. But what's the big deal about Jesus returning to Heaven? Join us as check out some key Scripture passages that explore why the Ascension of Christ is central to our walk with God!

Sermon Series on Jude: Called & Kept

April 27- Jude 1-4; "Called & Kept... What are You Contending For?"

May 4- Jude 5-16; "Called & Kept... 3 Truths & a Lie"

-Celebration of the Lord's Supper

May 11- Jude 17-25; "Called & Kept... Building Something that Lasts"

-Mother's Day^[SEP]

Sermon Series: Coronation of a King

May 18-Psalm 2; "Coronation of a King... Finding Refuge"

May 25-John 17: 6-26; "Coronation of a King... Eavesdropping on a Mediator's Prayer"

-Memorial Day Weekend

June 1-Genesis 11: 1-9, Acts 1: 1-9; "Coronation of a King... Deep and Wide"

-Ascension Sunday; Celebration of the Lord's Supper



The **final hearing** for the Administrative Commission of Presbytery of Western NC will be here at Union **Sunday, May 4, at 3PM**. It is very important that we have quorum. Please make plans to attend. There will be a time of fellowship directly after the meeting in the fellowship hall.



GOOD NEWS RISING OFFERING

Thanks to your generous giving for the Good News Rising Offering, \$1,164 will be equally divided three ways to support the World Renew Gift Catalog, Frontier Fellowship's work in Pakistan, and to "C" missionary in Southeast Asia (granddaughter of one of our Church members). At the writing of this article additional money is still being raised by the children and youth for added support of World Renew.

BABY BOTTLE BLESSING

During the months of May and June, the WOC are sponsoring our annual Baby Bottle Blessing Campaign. We will be collecting donations for Crisis Pregnancy Center and invite the congregation to help support this campaign. Baby bottles may be picked up at any entrance beginning Mother's Day, May 11 and returned on Father's Day on June 15.

SUMMER CONGREGATION SONG REQUESTS

During the month of May, we will be collecting song requests from you! Every summer the hymns and praise songs we sing during worship are chosen from the congregation's favorites! So, we invite you to look through our hymnals, be listening to Christian radio, and maybe even dig out a couple favorite Christian songs from your childhood! Just drop your requests in the offering any Sunday in May and we will do our best to make your song part of our worship all summer long!!

PRAYER AFTER WORSHIP

Join us on **Sunday, May 25** for a special prayer service after worship service in the prayer room across from the sanctuary. We will pray for those struggling with grief, health concerns, and thank god for the many blessings in our lives.



DON'T FORGET TO WEAR RED

It's almost time again!! The first 3 Sundays of June are Ascension, Pentecost, and Trinity Sunday. To celebrate, it is time to dust off those red dresses, shirts, ties, and socks. We invite you to come these 3 Sunday's dressed in red! **Let's wear red, June 1, 8, and 15** for these special days on our church calendar.

UPCOMING EVENTS



**UNION PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
VACATION
BIBLE SCHOOL**

**JULY 7 - 11, 2025
5:30 PM - 8:00 PM**

**5615 UNION ROAD
GASTONIA, NC 28056**

diving into friendship with God

- *CLASS
- *CRAFTS
- *MUSIC
- *FOOD
- *GAMES
- *SNACKS



SCAN ME



Spring Fling

Join us for a time of fun, fellowship, and games!
Be sure to bring snacks and drinks to share and a lawn chair!

**SATURDAY, MAY 17
3:00-8:00 PM**

UNION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SPRING FLING DETAILS

Be sure to mark your calendars and invite a friend for this day full of fun and fellowship! We look forward to seeing everyone there!

SCHEDULE OF THE DAY:

- 3:00 – 4:00 – Scavenger hunt and trail tours
- 4:00 – 5:00 – Karaoke and Line Dancing
- 5:00 – 6:00 – Candle making
- 6:00 – 7:00 - Dinner (pizza, salad bar, tea, lemonade)
- 7:00 – Bonfire and sing-along



BOOK CHICKS

Do you enjoy reading a good book? How about snacks and socializing? Join us monthly for our Book Chicks book club meetings for some great food, fun, and fellowship! For more information or to find out what book we are reading, please reach out to Kim Morrison. Our next meeting is **Monday, May 19th at 6:30 PM.**

BINGO

Join us for BINGO at Terrace Ridge on **Thursday, May 15th at 3 PM.** You are sure to receive many blessings from this outreach event!



WOMENS CIRCLE

The Golden Girls and Soul Sisters Circles will meet on **Monday, May 5th.** The Golden Girls will meet at **11 AM** for their monthly meeting. The Soul Sisters will meet at **7PM** for their monthly meeting. We hope you will join us!

5 CENTS A MEAL

Our next 5 Cents a meal offering will be on **Sunday, May 4th during worship.** The money collected will go to support our very own blessing box.



HAPPY YEARS

Happy Years will be on **May 21st at 12 PM.** We will be having some delicious BBQ! All ages welcomed and invite a friend.

MEN OF THE CHURCH MAY MEETING

The next Men of the Church meeting will be at **6 PM on May 14th**! Come enjoy dinner and a devotion together and stay for our monthly planning meeting if you are able! All men are encouraged to attend.



UNION ENSEMBLE PRACTICE

Practices for Union's Music Ensemble in **May** will be right after church on **May 11 and 18!** Feel free to join us if you love to praise God with your voice!

LOAVES & FISHES STORE

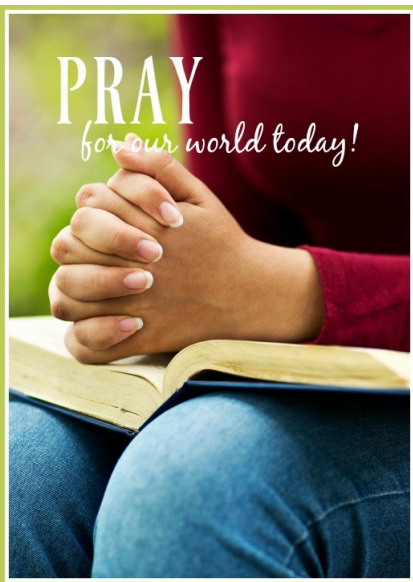
Every year Union has a month that we are responsible for providing food for Crisis Assistance Ministries (CAM) in Gastonia. Our month is May. CAM serves approximately 250 families each month. New needs happen every day. Also, a student-led food pantry started last year quickly grew into four Gaston County schools and has continued to grow.

We gather food donations through the **Loaves and Fishes Store** located in the Prayer Room just across the hall from the Sanctuary. It will be open directly after Worship every Sunday in May starting May 4th. Please stop in and shop to help our Youth serve the Lord through this ministry. The items you purchase will be taken to CAM for their use.

There will be a bin setup outside of the doors into the Rotunda for donations from the community.



PRAYER FOR THE COMMUNITY & WORLD



-Frontier Fellowship in South Asia: Please keep in prayer the work of Indopartners in Indonesian. In February, more than 100 Indonesians met in person with members of the ministry after interacting with Indopartners' Digital Gospel resources. 18 chose to follow Christ. Let us pray that these individuals find church communities to be disciplined in. Let us also pray for the new Pakistan house churches that have started. Pray for wisdom, courage, and discernment for these new church leaders. Training for these churches depends on relationships between trainers in India and house church leaders in Pakistan. The ability for these individuals to connect is currently being hindered by the Pakistan-India conflict which has closed borders and increased tension and violence in the region.

-National Day of Prayer: May 1st is National Day of Prayer. Let us keep churches across the country in our prayers as they gather together. Locally, Firestone Wesleyan Church, is having a community time of pray on May 1st at 7:30AM, 12PM, and 6PM. Pastor James will be joining them for prayer at 7:30AM.

-End of the School Year: As students and teachers are wrapping up school this month, let us keep in them in prayer. We can pray for end-of-year testing, for the safety of students over the summer (particularly for children of poverty who receive so much support in terms of resources and food during the school year), and for school graduates who are moving on to new adventures and challenges. We can also pray for the teachers in our community. May they get the rest they need to be re-energized over the break! And may students and teachers alike grow in their walk with Christ over the summer.



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p>Sunday 9AM Sunday School 10 AM Worship</p>				1	2	3
<p>4 5 Cents a Meal 3:00 PM Congregational Meeting</p>	<p>5 11 AM Golden Girls 7 PM Soul Sisters 7 PM Men's Bible</p>	<p>6 10 AM Bible Study 7 PM B & G</p>	7	8	9	10
<p>11 2:30 PM W&S</p>	<p>12 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>13 10 AM Bible Study</p>	<p>14 6 PM MOC</p>	<p>15 3 PM Bingo 6 PM Flourishing Church</p>	16	<p>17 3-8 PM Spring Fling</p>
<p>18 2:30 PM Session</p>	<p>19 6:30 PM Book Chicks 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>20 10 AM Bible Study</p>	<p>21 12 PM Happy Years</p>	22	23	24
<p>25 11 AM Prayer After Worship</p>	<p>26 7 PM Men's Bible Study</p>	<p>27 10 AM Bible Study</p>	28	<p>29 6 PM WOC Council Meeting</p>	30	31

Union Presbyterian Church

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Reverend James Holeman
Pastor

Tammy Biddix
Administrative Assistant

Jennifer Nelson
Communications Director

Jieeun Ha
Accompanist

Church Hours
3:00 PM—6 PM
Tuesday and Thursday



May 4
May 4
May 17

Congregational Meeting
Communion & 5 Cents of Meal
Spring Fling